



Crisis of confidence in Bulgarian media continues

Foundation Media Democracy (FMD) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) present survey and annual report 2014 on Bulgarian Media

Only every sixth Bulgarian (17 percent) believes in the independence of media. According to a representative survey commissioned by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the trust of Bulgarian citizens in their media has barely increased. The public relations (PR) of politicians is negatively evaluated as well: 63 percent of the citizens feel insufficiently informed. Moreover, the KAS and FMD presented their annual monitoring on political reporting. Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and his party GERB are opinion leaders in the media.

Comparing the results with the last year's monitoring, the Bulgarian media landscape doesn't make significant progress. "Still, very few Bulgarians believe in real freedom of media", explained Christian Spahr, head of the Media Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. According to the opinion poll, 59 percent of the Bulgarians disagree that media are free in their country. Many remain indecisive and only 17 percent explicitly believe in free media reporting. "The lack of trust continues", adds Spahr. In a worldwide context, Bulgaria's press freedom is currently ranked 100th (Reporters without borders). The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has already published a detailed study concerning the pressure on journalists in Bulgaria in November 2014.

The citizens feel insufficiently informed not only by the media, but also by the political elites. 63 percent evaluate the public relations work of the politicians as poor or very poor. "Parties and government need to invest more in a modern and transparent information policy", concluded Spahr. The Media Program South East Europe of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung will extend its activities for communication experts from politics. The institute "Market Links" interviewed 1,100 Bulgarians for the survey (December 2014).

According to an annual media monitoring of KAS and FMD, Prime Minister Boyko Borissov is the most frequently mentioned personality in the political news. Borissov is named 3,908 times in eight leading media outlets during 2014. This is 80 percent more often than the second most frequently mentioned person, President Rossen Plevneliev. Both politicians were increasingly positive described. According to the analysts of FMD this correlates with the election victory of Borissov in October 2014. Among the political parties, Borissov's conservative party GERB ("Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria") is most frequently mentioned.

„Positive to emphasize is that the public broadcaster BNT remains critical to the three big parties and that it fulfills its role of a public watchdog in interest of all citizens“, says the head of FMD Orlin Spassov. "However, it is also true that the necessary changes in the media landscape did not happen in 2014.



Journalists still depend too much on external influences from economics, politics and administration." According to FMD and KAS, especially the media ownership is lacking transparency. Besides that, the self-regulation in the sector is not effective enough. Moreover, heavy economic losses of the media significantly affect the quality of the media outlets.

However, Spassov and Spahr welcome announcements of the Bulgarian government to improve the media legislation in the current election period. Accordingly, only media companies which respect minimum ethical standards will be allowed to participate in public tendering such as public information campaigns. Furthermore, the government would not give public funds to media whose ownership remains unclear, and it will deal more effectively with the issue about the monopolies in the sector. "Although not many details have been presented yet, the government's suggestions will hopefully lead in the right direction", explains FMD media expert Orlin Spassov. "It is important to involve all relevant stakeholders in the debate: politicians, media owners and journalists. All three groups suffer from the lack of trust in media", says Christian Spahr.

The research institute Market Links analysed more than 21.000 news of four daily newspapers (Trud, Telegraf, Sega, Presa) and four television channels (BNT, bTV, Nova TV, TV 7).

Further information can be found at: www.kas.de/medien-europa